

Central Intelligence Agency

Washington, D. C. 20505

## DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

10 May 1984

SUDAN: The Southern Insurgency [REDACTED]

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Summary

The Nimeiri regime faces its most serious insurgent threat since the conclusion of the Sudanese civil war in 1972. During the past year, a reasonably effective force of southern rebels has emerged under the command of John Garang, a former Sudanese Army officer. Garang's forces are conducting increasingly sophisticated assaults on military garrisons and police posts, foreign economic projects, and the southern transportation network. Rebel successes have eroded morale in the Sudanese military. President Nimeiri appears unwilling to make sufficient political concessions to stem the rebellion, even though his forces are incapable of containing what probably will be a major insurgent offensive during the next few months. [REDACTED]

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Insurgent capabilities have dramatically improved over the last year, largely for three reasons:

- The mutiny of some 500 southern Sudanese military and police personnel in May 1983 brought into the insurgent movement an experienced military cadre that is familiar with the southern region and with the organization and operations of the Sudanese Army.
- Ethiopia continues to provide the guerrillas a secure base area that permits them to train and operate from Ethiopian territory.

This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED] Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. It was coordinated with the Directorate of Operations. Information as of 4 May 1984 was used in its preparation. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division [REDACTED]

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- Ethiopian, Soviet, and Libyan support to Garang has at least temporarily unified the insurgents under his leadership and guaranteed them ready access to modern arms. [REDACTED]

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There are sharp tribal and ideological differences among the dissidents, however, and Garang's leadership is only grudgingly accepted by some of them. Members of Garang's Dinka tribe clashed with the Nuer supporters of Samuel Gaitut in early April in an Ethiopian border area, possibly wounding Gaitut. This fight--the second in less than a year--demonstrated the fragility of Garang's coalition. Some Nuers in Garang's forces subsequently defected to Gaitut, and others were executed by Garang.

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### Insurgent Strategy and Tactics

Garang now has approximately 6,000 men in his Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA). His strategy has been to apply military and economic pressure on Nimeiri through limited operations during the dry season while preparing for a larger and more sophisticated offensive in the rainy season that is just beginning. The SPLA's operations since November 1983 have included:

- Attacks aimed at shutting down vital oil and water projects.
- Attacks on missionaries and kidnaping of foreign workers to gain international attention and demonstrate the Sudanese military's inability to provide security in the south.
- Assaults on river traffic, mining of roads, and destruction of important railroad bridges to isolate the south militarily and economically.

The attacks on southern transportation already have led to serious shortages of food, fuel, and ammunition. Recent US Embassy reporting indicates the local populace blames the government, not the insurgents, for the shortages. [REDACTED]

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Assaults on military garrisons and police posts during February and March demonstrate that the insurgents are capable of battalion-size (1,000 men) operations and understand how to support their assaults with directed fire and heavy mortar barrages. In contrast to government forces in the south, the insurgents appear well supplied with mortars, heavy machineguns, radios, food, and ammunition. Guerrilla intelligence is accurate enough to permit the insurgents to pinpoint weaknesses in Sudanese defenses and generally to avoid the infrequent but large sweep operations launched by Khartoum. We believe the insurgents

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have had portable SAM-7 missiles for some time, although Sudanese aircraft losses to date have been due to the insurgents' use of heavy machineguns. The guerrillas' effective use of gunfire against Sudanese helicopters has helped offset the government's advantage in airpower. [REDACTED]

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### Government Forces

The Nimeiri regime has responded to increased insurgent activity over the last year by increasing the number of ground force units in the south from 12 to 16 battalions (approximately 15,000 men). Eight battalions are in the Upper Nile Region, five are in Equatoria, and at least three are in Bahr al Ghazal. Airborne units also have rotated in and out of the south when needed to support anti-insurgent sweep operations. Smaller armor, artillery, and antiaircraft units have been sent south to shore up weak garrisons. [REDACTED]

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The Sudanese Air Force has provided close air support with its two US F-5 fighters and some of its nine West German BO-105 and 12 French/Romanian SA-330 PUMA helicopters equipped as gunships. The Air Force's most important mission, however, has been the aerial resupply of southern garrisons. This mission has become essential with the onset of the rainy season and the interruption by the insurgents of nearly all other transportation into the south. The Air Force's five flyable US-supplied C-130s and three flyable Canadian DHC-5 BUFFALO aircraft are barely able to meet the minimum requirements of the southern garrisons. Their continued heavy use and inadequate maintenance raise doubts as to how much longer they will remain operational. [REDACTED]

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The Sudanese military faces major problems in gaining momentum against the insurgents. Supply shortages almost certainly will grow throughout the south. Poor maintenance and lack of spare parts idle the Army's trucks, armored cars, and aircraft. Most of the military's small arms are worn out, and its ammunition is outdated and defective. Military relations with the local population also are likely to deteriorate as the Army begins to confiscate already scarce civilian food supplies. [REDACTED]

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These problems and continuing insurgent successes have seriously demoralized government forces.

- Some helicopter pilots are refusing to fly combat missions.
- Some northern officers are evading duty in the south.
- Most significantly, some Army troops garrisoned in the south no longer actively search for insurgents, while others routinely fail to coordinate their anti-insurgent operations with other Army units. [REDACTED]

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Weak, incompetent leadership from Khartoum--together with inadequate pay and personnel policies that make promotions difficult to obtain--also contributes to serious morale problems in the government forces. Competent military commanders in the south recognize there is little they can do to stop desertions and stem the tide of apathy and indifference affecting their garrisons. [REDACTED]

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### Reconciliation Efforts at Standstill

Attempts to reach a political settlement with the south have made no progress since Nimeiri made a conciliatory speech in early March. The President and his advisers have concentrated on more immediate problems such as the Libyan airstrike and labor unrest. Negotiations with southern politicians in Khartoum have stalled, and the government has not yet acted on such key southern concerns as the restriction of Islamic law and the sharing of profits from development projects in the south. Insurgent leaders, moreover, have ignored Nimeiri's offer of amnesty and rebuffed his attempts to establish contacts with rebel representatives abroad. [REDACTED]

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Nimeiri took a hard line toward the south in a speech delivered on 29 April, the day he declared an indefinite state of emergency. In the speech, Nimeiri displayed a renewed personal commitment to implementing Islamic law throughout Sudan. He also referred to insurgent leader Garang as a Marxist who is jeopardizing economic development in the south. Nimeiri's speech and his subsequent reshuffling of the cabinet and party leadership underscore his preoccupation with the need to consolidate political support in the north. We believe his stress on Islam is sincere but also is an effort to rally political support--especially from the Muslim Brotherhood, which opposes concessions to the south regarding Islamic law. [REDACTED]

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Leaders of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the political arm of the SPLA, have taken an equally hardline position. Joseph Oduho, head of an SPLM delegation currently visiting Western Europe, told French journalists that his organization rules out negotiations with the Nimeiri regime. He complained about new Islamic legislation and said official promises to respect the rights of non-Muslims are lies. Oduho said his organization is committed to an armed struggle to liberate all of Sudan. [REDACTED]

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Oduho has been trying to draw the attention of European leaders to the southern insurgent cause and to obtain their financial and moral support. According to the US Embassy in Paris, Oduho told French officials in mid-April that the United States would not be a credible intermediary between Khartoum and the SPLM. He said the United States treats the insurgents as a "bunch of Communists" because they rely on Ethiopian aid, and for this reason he opposes US oil companies operating in Sudan. The

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insurgents apparently have become increasingly convinced that US military aid to Khartoum is aimed at crushing their movement.

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### Outlook

We expect significant insurgent operations before the height of the rainy season in July and August, even though the recent guerrilla infighting has delayed preparations for a major offensive. The insurgents may seek maximum psychological advantage by attacking just before and during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan (31 May to 29 June) and by attempting to occupy a garrison such as Bor, where many of the insurgents mutinied from the Sudanese Army in 1983. We believe the insurgents will then consolidate their support bases in Upper Nile and establish new bases in Bahr al Ghazal before moving against a strategic provincial capital such as Malakal.

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We doubt that Sudanese forces are capable of preventing a sustained insurgent offensive during the rainy season. Moreover, we believe government forces will remain incapable of engaging in significant offensive operations of their own. Khartoum's likely strategy of minimizing engagements with the insurgents by defending only the most important garrisons probably will not forestall a major government defeat in the south.

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Despite the bleak military prospects, Nimeiri probably will continue to resist pressure from Western governments and Egypt to make major concessions to southern interests, such as relaxing the application of Islamic law. He may, however, allocate some additional development assistance to the south. His concern with shoring up his support in the north will continue to distract him from the southern problem. The reluctance of insurgent leaders to accept amnesty may be an additional incentive for Nimeiri to ride out the rainy season and limit his political initiatives. Moreover, Nimeiri may reason that the foreign military aid he has received since the Libyan airstrike will enable him to subdue the insurgents or at least to negotiate a more favorable settlement after improving the military situation.

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Nimeiri's apparent unwillingness to work actively toward a political settlement with the south could eventually undermine his support in the Sudanese military. If the insurgents humiliate the Army during the rainy season by holding towns or garrisons--even temporarily--or inflict major casualties, disaffected officers might turn on Nimeiri.

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[illegible]

Event	Location	Date
① Southern army units' mutiny crushed	Bor, Pochalla, Pibor Post	May 1983
② Town attacked	Nasir	May 1983
③ Foreigners held hostage/rescued	Boma	June-July 1983
④ Village occupied	Luwal	September 1983
⑤ Foreigners held hostage/released	Rub Kona (Chevron camp), Jonglei Canal (French company, CCI, base)	November 1983
⑥ Town attacked	Malwal	November 1983
⑦ Town besieged	Nasir	November-December 1983
⑧ Oilfield attacked	Rub Kona (Chevron camp)	February 1984
⑨ Canal attacked, hostages taken	Sobat	February 1984
⑩ Roads mined	Sobat-Bor roads	February 1984
⑪ Nile steamer attacked	Fangak	February 1984
⑫ Province capital attacked	Malakal	February 1984
⑬ Town attacked	Uwayl	March 1984
⑭ Railroad bridge heavily damaged	Lol River	March 1984

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